



BIG MACK, SHORT

John Blackman briefly outlines Mack's NM series and photographs a superbly restored NM-8

Introduced into service in 1940, the Mack NM-1 was the American company's first military 6x6. Intended as a 6-ton cargo truck cum prime mover for towing anti-aircraft guns and the like, an order for 87 was placed in December 1939, quickly followed by an additional order for 107 in January 1940. These later trucks were designated NM-2 but differed from the NM-1 in only minor respects such as smaller headlamps with the sidelights mounted on top. The standard powerplant was Mack's six-cylinder EY engine, a militarised version of its Thermodyne EY. From a capacity of 11,595cc the EY produced 170bhp at 2100rpm and, via a Mack TR36 five-speed gearbox and Timken-Detroit two-speed transfer box, drove the rear or all axles – also manufactured by Timken-Detroit.

Come December 1940 and another order for 104 Mack NM-series trucks resulted in the NM-3, again with minor updates. There was a pintle under a new arched front bumper, the radiator shell carried the 'Mack' nameplate, the sidelights were repositioned to the wings and the brush guards made smaller. It was also the last of the NM series to have the closed cab derived from Mack's civilian model L cab.

SPECIAL EXPORT

Subsequent to the United States entering WW2 it was decided that the 6-ton 6x6 as produced by Corbitt, White and others should be standardised for the US Army while the Mack 6-ton 6x6 would be for export/Lend-Lease use. Plans to produce an NM with Mack axles rather than those by Timken-Detroit and which would have been designated NM-4 came to nothing

so the production series jumped straight to the NM-5 of which 1060 were ordered in January 1943. Since it has already been mentioned that the NM-3 was the last NM with a closed cab you will realise that the major difference exhibited by the NM-5 was an open cab with steel half doors and a canvas top. The NM-5 also had a wooden, not steel, cargo body, but was otherwise virtually the same as the preceding NMs.

The same could be said of the 3240 NM-6s ordered in February 1943, the 1944 NM-7s contracted in August 1943 and, finally, the early 1945 order for 649 NM-8s. During WW2 NMs were delivered to the UK and to the Middle East and India and were mainly used by British and Commonwealth forces. Post war, NMs – which, by the way, had cost on average \$8500 each – were passed on to other European allies such as France and the Netherlands.

BACK TO ITS ROOTS

The example featured here and owned by Belgian MV enthusiast, Jurgen Billen, was indeed delivered to the British Army but subsequently passed to the French. It is from the last batch built, a 1945 NM-8. He acquired it in 2012 from Dutch MV buff, Jeroen Sleijpen, who had found the truck in France in 2005. It was very much the worse for wear and Jeroen replaced the cab, rebuilt the wooden cargo body and swapped



A Garwood winch sits behind the cab and is chain-driven via a power take-off from the transfer case.


Left: Jurgen Billen (driving) and friends with the NM-8 and Fruehauf trailer at War and Peace Revival 2014.



Compare this view of the pristine cab with the accompanying 'before' shots.

For whatever reason, Jeroen didn't get around to finishing the Mack and so passed it on to Jurgen in 2012 partly restored. Jurgen spent the following two years stripping the Mack right down and then rebuilding and finishing it to a superb standard. Check out the accompanying photos to get some idea of the amount of effort involved. The scheme Jurgen chose for his Mack NM-8 has it representing a vehicle of the 17th Armored Engineer Battalion, 2nd Armored Division, at the time of the relief of Hasselt, Jurgen's hometown. The hood number is the original number for the truck and was obtained from the Mack

Trucks Historical Museum in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Mack was also able to supply original NM drawings which were an immense help, says Jurgen.

The project was finished just in time to take the Mack to Normandy for the 2014 D-Day commemorations. It performed faultlessly and clocked up some 1250 miles (2000km) in the process. When the NM-8 turned up in Folkestone for War and Peace Revival 2014 it had been mated to a 22-ton Fruehauf trailer which, once loaded with Max Shepherdson's M5A1 Stuart, made it just about the most impressive rig on site. 

STORY

the original Mack EY petrol engine for a Mack END673P Thermodyne diesel which, conveniently, linked to the original gearbox.

Below: Here Jurgen's NM-8 is linked to a 22-ton Fruehauf trailer loaded with an M5A1, but NMs were used for all manner of heavy towing duties during WW2 and, at least by the British Army, were also converted into recovery vehicles.



THE RESTORATION

Photographs courtesy of Jurgen Billen



Above and left: This is how the NM-8 appeared in 2005 when it was acquired by Dutch MV enthusiast Jeroen Sleijpen.



Surprisingly perhaps, most of the gauges were intact although everything was heavily weathered.



Above: The cab in particular was infested with tin worm. Above right: Most of the cab was replaced. Note that the upright nearest the camera has been completely eaten away at the base.

Jeroen Sleijpen restored both the cab and the wooden rear body but, in 2012, passed the project over to Jurgen Billen.



Over two years Jurgen stripped the Mack right down and rebuilt it. Here is the instrumentation.

The Thermodyne diesel was overhauled, painted and refitted.

The rolling chassis in August 2013.



Left: With the Mack END673P Thermodyne diesel that replaced the original Mack EY petrol engine belching exhaust gases, Jurgen negotiates the War and Peace Revival arena.